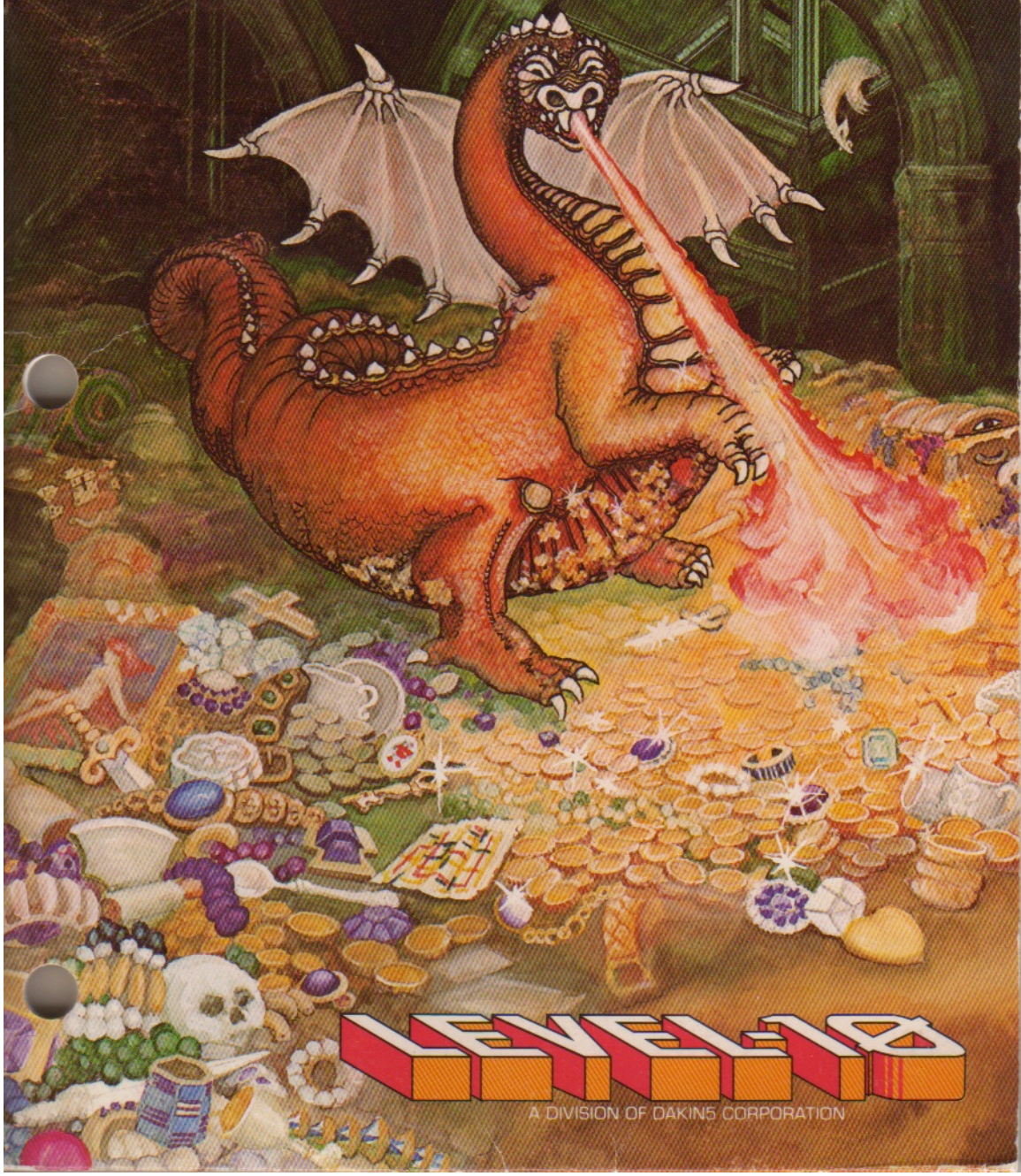


Dragon Fire™

By
Rodney
Nelsen



LEVEL 18

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DragonTM Fire

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Requires 48K of Memory, DOS 3.3, 1
Disk Drive and will run on:

Apple® II
Apple II Plus
Apple III

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THE DWARF

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has ever imagined being someone else — the child mimicking the bow-legged walk and ready shooting-hand of the cowboy, the adult caught up in the dream of a corporate vice-presidency — has indulged in the fantasy game of role-playing. The importance of the ability to role-play is often underestimated in our society, but how can we pretend to understand the feelings of another human being, or become fully involved in a piece of printed or televised fiction, or even daydream about what we will be doing next year or what we might become in our lives, without some of this ability to role-play?

Games such as DRAGON FIRE give you the opportunity to practice your role-playing at a new and fascinating level.

DRAGON FIRE allows you to step out of the mundane world of breakfast cereals, permanent press clothes, rising gasoline prices, and the rule of the clock, into a timeless world populated by elves, dwarves, and wizards, and the great dragon Salmadon, whose visage is terrible to behold. You will actually BECOME the warrior, the wizard, the huntress, the dwarf, or the elf. It will be YOU buying your weapons at Winsome Willy's Weapons Shop or celebrating with your friends at Three-finger John's tavern. It will be YOU descending into the dark and musty dungeons, the devastated and jerry-rigged remains of ten ancient cities layered one upon the other. It will be YOU battling for your very survival and all the treasure you can carry against the 170 hellish monster types who dwell there, YOU who will be seeking out the terrible Salmadon's lair down in the tenth and most dangerous level, attempting to slay him, round up his treasure, and escape alive.

Modern role-playing games began with minimal equipment: a rulebook, a map of the dungeons, several enthusiastic players, and with luck a

creative game-master who kept the play exciting and rewarding. The advent of computer role-playing games has made it possible for the individual to play, by him or herself, with a computer filling in as game-master, keeping track of his or her character, displaying the dungeons, and creating those all-important traps, pitfalls, and other obstacles which keep the game interesting. The random elements and multi-faceted characters, which give to role-playing games their feeling of life-simulation, are generated by your computer.

But the computer can only provide so much. Most of your enjoyment of any role-playing computer game will depend on your willingness to THINK about your character, to study the character background in the story "Dragon Keys," and then let the character flesh out within your mind. Try to visualize the shops as you make your purchases. Then when you're finally inside the dungeons try to visualize those as well, SEE the texture of the walls, HEAR the strange and unidentifiable sounds coming through the walls, SMELL the odors both exotic and nauseous, and let yourself TASTE the fear brought on by such monsters as the Basilisk, the Mind Peeler, the Gray Sludge, the Howler, and all the other monster types who dwell there. Visualize the treasures you have won after a hard-won battle. Visualize each room and whatever horrors are lurking there to attack.

Let us suppose you've chosen the warrior as your alter ego:

You've been walking cautiously for some time down a long corridor so dimly-lit you are only able to see twenty feet ahead of you at any given moment. The gray walls are festooned with cobwebs, the charred remnants of old timbers, and many old signs in ancient and archaic languages. Suddenly a strange winged creature flaps around the corner. You crouch, your

sword and shield at the ready, but it passes you by. Your eyes discover an old and dusty pouch in one of the small piles of rubble — ragged old tapestry and ceiling fragments mostly — characteristically strewn about the wall's edge. Breathlessly you pick it up, loosen the drawstring, and discover several large rubies and emeralds.

As you proceed around the bend you're feeling good about yourself, having been only slightly fatigued by your last battle with the Black Dragon — a blind, serpentine creature with aspects of a great cockroach: obviously something from the dark lower bowels of the world. You carefully avoided its venom and were able to add an emerald tiara to your treasure horde, now roughly worth a fantastic 35,000 Kraums. What's more important, the experience you gained in the vigorous battle will serve you well in the many encounters to come.

You pass a metallic section of the wall, the surface buffed to a mirror-like polish. You look deeply into the shiny metal and are surprised you haven't aged since entering the dungeons; you've the same dark curly hair, handsome gray and silver clothes, and gray eyes so often remarked ethereal and ghostly, as before.

There's a great blue door on the right side of the corridor, about fifteen paces ahead, just beyond an old pile of dusty bones and decayed and rusting weaponry. It seems to be of stout oak, about three inches thick, and bound with three iron bands. You try to open it but it's jammed. You slam your shoulder against the door once, but it holds. You try again, and again it holds. Slightly fatigued, you make another all-out effort and you hear something crack within the frame, and the door tilts into the room drunkenly.

The room is oppressively hot, so hot in fact you're almost instantly drenched in sweat. The padding beneath your armor grips your flesh tightly, seeming to shrink against you. There are clouds of steam here and there in the blue-lit room, but behind the clouds nothing can be seen within the deep shadows. The floor looks to be of natural rock, and almost too hot to step on. There are several cracks running the length of

this floor, caused by the heat or some seismic upheaval you do not know.

A great giant of earthen colors suddenly lumbers out of the steam. He has mossy-looking hair, and two enormous bulging eyes which much resemble two boulders wedged on either side of his enormous nose. You decide to attack!

You strike him a glancing blow with your sword but he has nicked you once on the upper arm with the dagger he carries. You circle him warily, noting with some relief his light armor. In your judgment you give him an Armor Class rating of 4. Lucky for you you decided to purchase a full set of plate mail at Fliver's, raising your class to a 9. Due to the fact you carry both sword and a hand axe, you believe your cumulative strength to be greater than his.

But ramming the door has weakened you. How long can you hold out?

You feint with the sword and the Mountain Giant misses! But your returning blow misses the mark as well when the giant leaps a crack.

You miss again! He stabs your forearm with his dagger!

Rising from a crouch you slice him once, twice, three times with your sword!

The Mountain Giant staggers back, swings forward, misses, and you slash his hand badly as he retreats.

But wait! He kicks out swiftly with one heavy boot and snaps your bronze sword!

Pulling out your hand axe you swing in low, viciously, striking him twice in succession. He stumbles, falls, and you're able to finish him off!

Congratulations.

You find a small shelf on the wall behind where the giant made his entrance. A gold medallion lies there, your prize for defeating him. You add this to the other items in your backpack, then hurry out. The fight has greatly weakened you, however, and you know you must reach the staircase to the next level quickly, avoiding other battles until then if possible, in order to trade this hard-won experience in for renewed vigor for the corridors, rooms, and monsters to come.

Hurry, the dungeons are waiting! Enter at your own risk.



THE WARRIOR



DRAGON KEYS

by
Steve Rasnic Tem

There is no night blacker, not even the night in the sleeper's head after the dream has died, than night within a walled city. In a city fearful of the foreign attack, or from the attack of creatures less definable, the high walls shut off most of the sky. You grope your way through streets awash in sewage, with a lantern clutched in your fist if you're smart, in company of a bodyguard holding that lantern if you're smarter still.

The fat merchant pulled closer to the warrior as they crossed the thick stepping stones rising out of the filth in Pot-menders' Lane to the walkway bordering that lane. The merchant paid well to keep his perfumed hide intact, but the warrior found this new work not much to his liking. It was like having some needy, unwanted lover hanging on to his belt, he thought. His own mother had neither smelled nor dressed so well.

Few were about this particular night, with the exception of those whose line of business might be called questionable. The warrior kept a

ready hand by the hilt of his sword. The only sounds that might be heard, if one had wits together enough to hear them, would be the chants and caterwaulings of the worshipers of Nesst, the shadow god, whose services were never discussed, not even in the taverns. No one knew exactly where they kept their church; you could hear them all over the city. The warrior had heard rumors they met in secret tunnels beneath the lanes, the walls of their sanctuary dripping with seepage. Such tales made him move a bit more nervously than usual; the warrior feared little, but he did fear what could not be seen, or touched.

What if they had hidden passages to give them access to the lanes? Or trap doors to drop a man into their lair for sacrifice? The warrior shuddered, and imagined scarlet hands groping after his footsteps in the dark.

At that moment cold, wet fingers closed over his right shoulder.

The warrior shouted inarticulately, leaped and turned with sword

drawn, held diagonally to protect face and belly from the sacrificial dirks of Nesst's followers. A dark, round-shouldered shadow staggered toward him.

The merchant's sweaty face popped into the dim, yellow light given off by the lantern, his flaccid jowls shaking, eyes gone small as black seeds. He looked once into the warrior's gaze and fell splayed to the filth-covered stones, weeping and gibbering.

The warrior helped him to his feet in embarrassment. He couldn't bear to look at the man. The merchant stumbled on the slick stones of the walkway several times trying to keep up with the warrior's swift pace, but never once did the warrior turn. The tavern was only a short distance now.

A sudden clank on the stones by his feet made the warrior halt. It hadn't sounded much like the fall of the merchant's fat money belt.

He looked down. An enormous red key, almost scarlet, lay at his feet, glowing as if molten, catching the available lamplight as if carved from some enormous ruby. He bent to examine it, then hesitated, afraid it might burn. It seemed to sizzle on the stone.

And behind that sizzle he detected another sound....

The first thief thrust his pike through the folds of the warrior's cloak even as he was bent over the key, the spear point wedging between the stones, sending the warrior and thief jointly into the sewage. The warrior already had his knife out and into the thief's lower intestine before they landed.

The warrior was just getting to his feet when the merchant slammed into him attempting to escape a burly bandit dressed in rags, but carrying both shield and mace. The warrior shoved the merchant aside roughly, rolling just as the mace came down and into the wall behind him. He was able to catch the edge of the shield with one of his feet, however, dislodging it from the bandit's grasp. Both scrambled for the loose shield; the warrior came up with it. The bandit stepped back onto the next set of stepping stones, backing slowly as the warrior approached, bronze sword drawn and shield held chest-high, alternating

feet between the slush and dry stone.

Suddenly moving sideways off the stone, the bandit swung out with the mace, attempting to catch the edge of the shield and pull it away from the warrior. But the warrior blocked the blow off the side edge and worked his blade around it, slashing the bandit's arm as he retreated to the other side of the stone.

The warrior moved in, stepping on top the stone, moving the point of his weapon in slow circles aligned with the bandit's face, then stepped down into the sewage flow and began closing, pressing the bandit against the far wall of the lane.

Lunging quickly, the warrior went for the bandit's open throat, the bandit avoiding the thrust with a backward stumble. The warrior shouted angrily as the sword gouged the soft, moss-encrusted brick, jarring his hand roughly against the hilt. He pulled back into a guarded stance, noting instantly that the blade was out of true. "Damnable bronze. . .," he muttered under his breath, knowing he'd have to have the blade worked on once again. After enough punishment the blade tended to go blunt, becoming not much better than a club.

The bandit suddenly swung low and viciously with the mace, the warrior stepping back, then slipping, his feet sliding forward, the back of his spine crashing into the edge of the stepping stone. The sharp pain tightened his muscles badly, but he still had enough awareness to get the shield over him, the sword poised below to block another low swing. The bandit seemed to have little skill, but a surplus of brute strength, confirmed by the heavy blows being delivered to the warrior's shield. He braced himself further, the pain in his lower back rising like a fluid up his spinal column.

He hoped to rest just a bit longer, keeping the shield well above him, so that the pain in his spine might lessen a bit and he could regain some of his strength. Then, he vowed, the bandit would be wishing he'd attacked some other party this night. His greed would prove costly indeed.

The warrior's arm was weakening, the battered shield pressing ever-closer into his face. He could hear the bandit grunting with exertion as he landed each blow.

With eyes slightly dimmed he was able to see the merchant sitting by the wall, still too frightened to even run away. The warrior looked at the pike lying at the merchant's feet. He caught the merchant gazing at the pike as well, then they looked into each other's eyes a brief moment. The merchant was the first to turn away. The warrior knew then that the perfumed pig would risk nothing to help him.

Suddenly the blows ceased, the grunts replaced by a sharp intake of breath. The warrior moved the shield to his left slightly, looking around its edge. As his vision cleared he was able to see the bandit, an arrow fletched in bright red sticking out of his throat, a look of profound surprise briefly crossing his face, then fading into a profound grief as the massive body collapsed into the running sewer.

A tall sandy-headed figure dressed in reds and browns strode over his supine form and pushed the arrow completely through the bandit's throat, pulling it out the other side. The figure turned and looked at him with a disinterested gaze. It was a woman.

"Is that yours?" she asked, gesturing toward the stone which still bore the bright red key.

"Apparently. . . ."

She pulled an identical key out of her coat. "Have you seen the wizard's notice?"

"I've been with that fat pig of a merchant all evening."

"These keys have appeared to several the past two evenings; the wizard has posted a notice at Three-finger John's tavern asking for all who might have such keys in their possession to meet with him in the tavern tonight."

The warrior looked up at the woman with some distrust. He'd had a dream involving a wizard the night before; it hadn't been pleasant. He'd had to fight some great and hairy animal within a darkened chamber, until bloodied and weakened he'd clambered back up a staircase he'd but recently descended. But wonder of wonders! He'd felt suddenly renewed by his experiences, and seemed ready to fight any and all monsters and shapes of the dark to reach his objec-

tive What that objective had been in the dream, he could not remember.

"What would you gain from this, woman?" he asked warily.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Sounds as if there might be gold, and some adventuring involved."

The warrior smiled and nodded his head.

He looked around for the merchant. Apparently the tall woman had frightened him away.

"Are you coming along?" she asked.

The warrior stood up stiffly, and stepped out of the sewage. "I owe you . . .," he began.

"You owe me nothing. He was a nuisance that needed removal. Besides, he hadn't yet bested you. I could see that you were merely resting."

The warrior looked down at the arrow she carried in her hand as she busily cleaned the broad head in oil, a head gilded and topped with a fine steel point. "I will come," he said.

"Are you able to travel?"

"Simply lead the way, Warrior," he said, and they started down the dark stepping stones toward a dim light at the end of the lane, location of Three-finger John's tavern.

Three-finger John's lacked a proper sign, but sported as ornate a doorway as any the warrior had ever seen. The story went that a great artisan with a weakness for the vine had been a regular patron there some years ago (so long ago, in fact, the tavern was called Four-finger John's at that time). But the man had spent too much time at the tavern and not enough time plying his trade of woodcarving and so had quickly run up a bill he had no funds for repaying. John seized this opportunity to obtain a new door for his establishment in barter.

The warrior stopped in front of this great door, as he often did, simply to admire. Four enormous wolves attacked a beautiful unicorn on the central panels, the unicorn having just gored one with its golden horn and then turning to lash out at another. Four large-eyed maidens looked on in horror, unaware of the three bearded bandits creeping up on them from the olive orchard. One of the maidens held a small harp, another a bowl of figs. Pheasants and wrens played in

the branches of a willow. A house cat pursued a mouse. In the borders a festival was in progress with street vendors, jousting, pickpockets, trystings, and varied figures discussing and arguing. Clouds were descending out of the lintel above the door, and various spirits and cupids could be seen sporting there. The warrior could also see a panorama of stars and more mythical beings in the narrow panel above these clouds if he examined the small carvings closely enough.

But at that moment his musings were interrupted as two young men in green and brown, obviously huntsmen in town for a drink or two, came flying through the double doors, eyes wide and lips mouthing silent, terrified shrieks, sending the two halves of the door crashing to the walls at either side.

The dwarf who worked down at the smithy's suddenly appeared in the dust-filled doorway, brushing off his clothes and looking about with a fierce, challenging expression. The young huntsmen, who must have each been a good two feet taller than the dwarf, and outweighing him considerably, looked up from the mire in the lane, chorused those same shrieks once again, and made off with a mix of stumblings, crawlings, and all-out dashes down the lane and across the stepping stones. The dwarf then looked at the warrior and the tall woman beside him, pinning them with black, angry eyes. "The drunken fools claimed I was short!" he shouted. Then he winked at the pair and belted with a hearty laughter, ushering them through the doorway into the clamor, bright lights, and pungent smells of Three-finger John's with much gesturing and back-slapping.

Three-finger John's looked more like a traveling road show than a food and drink establishment. The main serving room had a high ceiling with three tiers of tables on all four sides. Half the city appeared to be either seated at those tables or wandering the aisles, with a virtual army of serving maids and strolling vendors and players there to take care of them. Fights were in progress at three locations, and the warrior could see at least eight violations of the public codes simply at a glance. The licensed

beggars were well in evidence, as well as the licensed gamesmen and jugglers, and two or three of the Order Of The Licensed Leper.

"Gifts for Nesst?" an emaciated creature in a tattered robe asked at the warrior's elbow. He thrust his forearm backward into the creature's throat, stopping any further entreaties.

The dwarf ushered the pair to a table near the center of the room and joined them. "I hear you have one of the keys, Huntress . . ." he mumbled.

"We both have been so honored." She gestured toward the warrior.

The dwarf cocked his left eyebrow and rudely examined the warrior with his gaze. "I've seen you about. What would a northern warrior be doing this far south?"

"And what would a dwarf be doing working among men?" the warrior returned.

The dwarf laughed heartily. "I like you," he said. "But just remember that all treasure beneath the ground belongs by right to the dwarves. Of course, I wouldn't mind a bit of help clearing the dungeons of its pests."

The warrior stared at the dwarf in surprise. The dwarf took one look at his expression and smiled thinly. "I see you haven't yet heard of these things. Well, that is hardly my place to tell you. We'll all be talking with the wizard in a bit. Relax and enjoy yourself." Then he left them.

During the following minutes the warrior and the huntress witnessed a small man with one leg chasing a pig around several tables before being knocked down with a cudgel to the back of the head. The pig was caught and taken back into the kitchens for roasting. A domestic quarrel took place two tables away, ending when the mistress finally jammed a leg of lamb down the man's pock-marked throat. There were several fights: one between a leper and a follower of Nesst over a particularly generous client, one between a man in brightly-colored robes and a pack horse over a chunk of meat, and a long and nasty battle between one of the cooks and an enormous fat man over the right seasonings this time of year for Royal Spider Salad.

"It is time," the huntress said suddenly, and was on her way to the back

of the room almost immediately. The warrior leapt to his feet and followed.

It was a plain door. The huntress entered it quickly, shutting it behind her. Fearing some sort of trick to cheat him of his chance at the treasure and adventure, whatever they might be, the warrior approached the door cautiously, slipping his blade into the crack and pulling on the handle slowly with his free hand; one couldn't be too careful in such an establishment. He thought the huntress foolish indeed for her haste.

The door was suddenly jerked from his hand as a short, squat figure hit the door with both feet. The dwarf regained his feet quickly in a crouching stance, but the warrior already had the point of his sword pressed against the little man's throat. The dwarf grinned.

"It might have been anyone entering that door, Warrior. Cannot be too careful in such a place," he said. Then grinned even more broadly. "I like you more and more; you're rather handy with that pig-sticker to be sure!"

The warrior smiled slightly in return, chuckled, then slipped his sword back into his belt. He then turned slowly and took his place at a table in the center of the darkened chamber. The huntress sat down beside him, the dwarf taking his own place across the table, and at the end of the table sat a tall figure whose face was all in shadow, except for two, glowing quarter-moons, where the eyes might have been.

"Welcome . . ." the darkened figure said, in a whisper like wind through dry reeds, "I'm pleased the bandits did not prevent your arrival."

"But how . . .?" The darkened figure's hand raised out of shadow halted the warrior's question. It was long and narrow, the skin thin and transparent, showing blue veins and the soft shadows of bone. A brilliant yellow and silver ring glowed on the ring finger.

"Your questions will be answered in due time. Now may we please see your red key?"

The warrior slipped the large key out of his pouch and laid it on the table before him. As if by prearranged signal the huntress and the dwarf did likewise.

"Now we require the elf's key," the darkened figure stated flatly.

At that moment the warrior detected a light breeze behind him, and he saw several strands of the huntress' hair lifting and blowing about her forehead. Then the dwarf's stocking cap fell slightly forward over his eyes, causing him to fuss with it angrily. The tall figure in shadow seemed to be stirring restlessly.

The warrior rubbed his eyes. A gray place seemed to be blurring into the darkness within the empty chair by the shadowed figure. The gray blended into dark brown, then a lighter earth color, then green with brown trimming. The figure now congealing out of this blur had a thin, yet apparently muscular body, narrow pale face, and intense blue eyes. It pulled out another brilliant ruby-glowed key, and laid it on the table.

"Thank you . . ." the darkened figure whispered, then rose up from the chair. A pale mist seemed to slowly escape from the folds of the figure's cloak, gradually chasing away the shadows, and turning the cloak from black, to dark gray, to purple, and then finally to a brilliant, fiery red.

A fifth key suddenly appeared on the table.

The shadowed figure's face was now clearer to the warrior: thin and with a dried-out feel, crowned with a long, fine white head of hair. He was sure now this must be the wizard.

The wizard's cloak turned emerald green, sapphire blue, and butter yellow before finally settling into a peculiar shade of purple — a bit that of sunset, a bit of the roasted boar the warrior thought — as the wizard gestured with his narrow hands, his eyes flashing intermittently with the hues of each change.

The red keys slowly lifted, one at a time in counter-clockwise fashion, from the table. They rose straight into the air, the five keys circling slowly at first, then increasing in speed, until finally they blurred into a single crimson circle over the adventurers' heads.

Suddenly there was a great red flash, and all the keys disappeared.

The warrior and the dwarf leapt to their feet in protest, but the huntress cautioned them to keep their silence. "Trust him!" she uttered sharply.

The wizard bowed his head, suddenly becoming shadowed again, then rose up out of the shadows as a young, beautiful maiden. He bowed a second time and returned as Three-finger John, then once again returned to shadow only to come out eventually in his normal appearance.

"The keys have returned to the dungeons above Salmadon's lair, my friends, those ruins a half-day's journey from this tavern. You will have an opportunity later to find them again, as well as many others much like them. Their only purpose here tonight was to choose the adventurers who might attempt their retrieval from those dungeons, who might kill Salmadon and avenge my brother's death."

There was a nervous shifting around the table at the mention of the great dragon's name. The warrior felt that queasiness typical of him when any of the doings of the supernatural were mentioned. For the legendary Salmadon was no ordinary creature, but a demon, a nightmare made flesh. The fables described him as having a one-hundred foot wing span, with steel-hard claws and a scarlet, impenetrable hide. It was said that Salmadon could rip the soul out of a warrior's body with those claws without even scratching the skin.

The dwarf spoke up at this point. "I'm not here to avenge a stranger's death, Wizard, but to reclaim the treasure that rightfully belongs to the dwarves."

"You each have your own motives, Dwarf," the wizard said. "But they need not interfere with or exclude my own aims, or the purposes embedded within my brother's keys."

The elf, heretofore silent, stood and pulled himself up to sit cross-legged on the table. "We elves do not serve another's purposes easily, Wizard. With all due respect to your loss, I must hear this tale of your brother and the great dragon Salmadon."

The wizard looked down at the elf with apparent sadness, and immediately began his story, but so subtly the four did not even realize when he had first begun, until they were quite enveloped by the tale, and unable to distinguish that reality out of the distant past from their own.

And this was the wizard's tale:

The wizard had waited outside the multi-leveled labyrinth of dungeons for more than a day, as his brother had instructed. It had rained constantly, and the bare red clay of the hillside had turned into a virtually impassable mire. But the wizard admittedly preferred this relatively safe resting place outside those dungeons to his brother's current, unknown position — inside the dungeons, investing several unusual red keys with the power to destroy the great dragon Salmadon.

The so-called "dungeons" were actually a series of ruins, some said from several ancient and fabled cities which had occupied the hill at various times in the past, each new incarnation built on the remains of the former. These layers had theoretically been unified at some point in the past, the rubble blocking various passageways cleared, and staircases built at each end to allow easy access between levels. Why some individual or group would go to such trouble was not known. Over the ages a number of creatures had traveled here and made the dungeons their home, to join with the many creatures already at home here, left over from the reigns of the various city-states.

Many animals previously thought to be extinct still kept residence within the protective confines of the dungeons.

The wizard's brother had been obsessed with discovering as much as possible about the long-buried cities beneath the red clay hill. He was convinced there would be much in that knowledge which would increase his power. But the dragon Salmadon kept the lower reaches of the multi-level ruins to himself, and the brother was sure the dragon's lair held objects of great magical power as well as the fabled wealth. It was for these things he sought to destroy the great dragon.

The wizard held tightly the red key his brother had given him. He had been told that it would let him know if his brother needed his assistance.

Suddenly the key began to glow, then grew hot. Then it was virtually sizzling in the wizard's hand. He dropped it to burn its pattern into the wet red clay and raced inside the entrance.

"I fought many creatures and was almost destroyed myself several times," the wizard was saying as he ended his tale, and as the other four adventurers became aware of their immediate surroundings once again. The wizard seemed somehow older than when he had begun his story. "I barely escaped the dungeons intact. I was never able to recover my brother's body; all I found were the various red keys he had dropped along the way as Salmadon dragged him off to his lair."

"And how is it you expect one of us to find the great dragon and slay him when you could not?" asked the elf.

"I was tired and inexperienced in combat at that age, and I hadn't the time to find those keys which my brother had fixed with the power to slay Salmadon," the wizard replied. "If you find those keys and are able to maintain your strength and enough energy to make the long, vigorous trek, then any one of you has a chance to come back with the enormous wealth hidden in Salmadon's lair, a wealth greater than any known to these regions. But remember, you cannot take the wealth from Salmadon's lair without slaying him, and you cannot slay the great dragon without one of the right keys."

"And how is a key to slay him?" the warrior asked.

"I do not know what it is my brother did to those keys, but several are deadly to Salmadon, believe this."

The dwarf stood and looked over his competitors carefully. "I would think the odds are a bit unequal, Wizard. Some of us have more training than others in the arts of warfare and body-building."

"No need for concern about that, my friend." The wizard extended his arms as if to embrace the group. "The dungeons tend to be a great equalizer. In fact, so great is Salmadon's magic one cannot always count on the strength or constitution one is used to having when entering the dungeons. These abilities may be changed. Still, some of us may have a more difficult time than others there, and those will

simply have to muster a greater effort and determination. The magic of the dungeons tends to favor the adventurer with experience, so some of you will find that after fighting some of the creatures there and retreating to one of the staircases for rest, you will be renewed in proportion to any fighting experience you might have gained. So, persistence and courage are rewarded there." He looked at the dwarf, who folded his thick arms across his chest in a proud gesture.

"Why didn't you try out the first level, Wizard, come back to the town to map this out from memory, then return to the red clay hill when you'd regained your strength?" the huntress asked.

"Perhaps that is the strangest aspect of those dungeons, my friends." The wizard appeared to smile sadly. "Upon entering the ruins the various levels and rooms would appear to rearrange themselves, so none of you will ever know which level you will be starting out on. And consultation with the others will be to no avail, as each of you will no doubt find yourself on a different level when you enter."

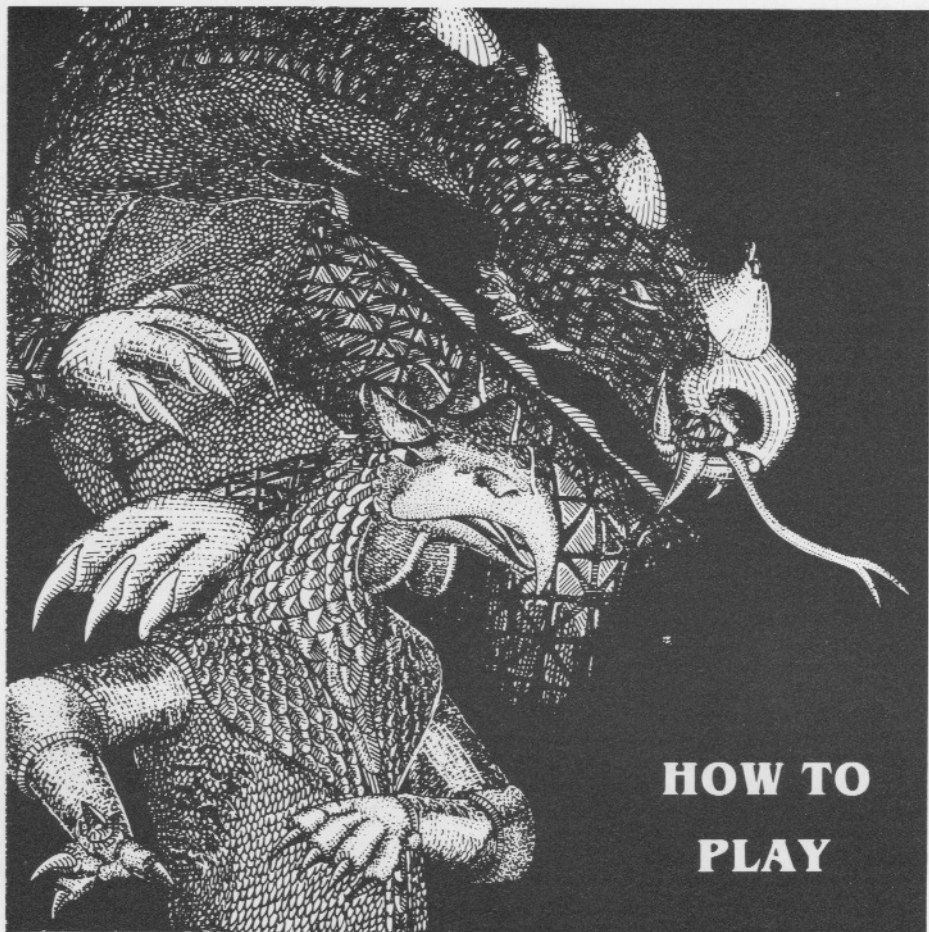
The wizard sat down wearily. "Check your purses. You may use whatever coppers you've on hand to buy any necessary supplies. Do not bother to borrow from moneylenders; items bought with borrowed money will do you no good in these dungeons. And I would advise you to spend them all before entering the dungeons because any unspent coppers will be dissolved by the mere closeness of Salmadon. I wish you luck, my friends; be so kind as to wish me the same."

Almost instantly the five were outside Three-finger John's tavern. It was early morning; apparently an entire evening had passed while they met. The wizard had already started up Potmender's Lane to buy his supplies the dwarf and elf quickly following.

The warrior and the huntress looked at each other briefly, then turned and went their own, separate paths to the shops.



THE HUNTRESS



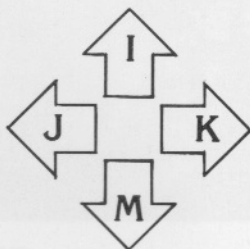
HOW TO PLAY

DRAGON FIRE is a very simple game to learn to play; your computer will display most of the information you need. A time factor is built in to the game, however, which costs you Life Points if you do not move your character through the maze quickly enough. Reading this manual carefully will enable you not only to imagine this fantasy realm in specific detail, but allow you to make the best decisions during the heat of play.

Before beginning a game please remember that **DRAGON FIRE** permits you to save a game in progress, so that you may return to the same point in the maze after quitting for a time. Please note that you must have a pre-initialized 3.3 diskette available before you start any game you think you might want to save. See the section entitled "Saving A Game."

COMMANDS

There are 7 basic command keys in **DRAGON FIRE**. They are only operative when a level of the maze is displayed on the screen. The first four are the old standbys, I, J, K, and M, used to move your character — represented by the white box in the maze — through the 10 levels of mazes.



J - Moves the character up
K - Moves the character left
M - Moves the character right
The other commands are:

Q - Which allows you to quit the game in progress. You then have the option of saving the game or aborting entirely.

And two hidden commands, which will not appear on your screen:
N - "No Sound." This can be used late at night or at other times to turn off the sound effects.

S - "Sound." This turns the sound effects back on.

Whenever you see a flashing cursor, read what's on the screen, then press RETURN. Whenever you are required to reply Y or N to a question, pressing RETURN will always default to a Y answer.

In all other cases the computer will give you a choice: (Y/N), (N/O), or a set of numbered items. You then respond with a numeral or letter, but not a complete word.

BEGINNING

To begin, insert the DRAGON FIRE diskette into the drive and turn on your computer. Your first glimpse of your most powerful foe, the great and fierce dragon Salmadon, is immediately displayed on your screen. Press the ESCape key to start the game.

NOTE: Pressing R - Rapid Start - allows you to go directly to the maze with computer-selected name, character, weapons and Life Points. This may be of particular benefit if a child wants to play the game.

The table you now see is a record, arranged by level of play, of the highest accumulation of wealth achieved by an adventurer outside Salmadon's lair. Press RETURN to continue.

DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE A PREVIOUS GAME? (Y/N) If you have saved a previous game and would like to continue it, answer Y and the computer will provide you with further instructions. Otherwise, your response should be N. Remember to press RETURN after your response.

DRAGON FIRE awards a certificate for dragon-slaying. The most recent certificate of play awarded will be displayed at this time.

DRAGON FIRE will next give you an opportunity to choose the level of expertise you will be playing on for the coming game. These levels are: 1) NOVICE, 2) LITTLE EXPERIENCE, 3) DID SOME DRAGON HUNTING, 4) PRETTY GOOD, and 5) EXCELLENT ADVENTURER. Choose by number. Remember that as you go higher in levels of expertise, the more difficult it is to wound any of the monsters. The formula the computer uses for determining whether a monster hits you or not becomes weighted in the monster's favor. It is best to begin modestly; it is very difficult to win at the higher levels of play.

ENTER YOUR NAME. You will be given 15 spaces for your real name, or a made-up name for your alter ego.

ATTRIBUTES

Character attributes are the many individual elements which make even the most boring human being a complex creation. Role-playing games such as DRAGON FIRE attempt to simulate this complexity by choosing a few basic characteristics and assigning each of these a numerical value. The higher the number, the greater is the character's possession of that particular attribute.

Your attributes consist of Constitution, Strength, Life Points, Armor Class, Wealth, Speed, and Experience.

After receiving your name, the computer will generate a random number of Constitution and Strength points for your character. These ratings may influence your choice of character since some characters require a particular value of some Attributes in order to function well in the game. For example: the warrior and the huntress should normally have a Strength rating of at least 15. If the rating given you by the computer is a 13, you may either choose a different character or build up this Strength rating through the purchase of weaponry. The elf's Experience, however, will increase more quickly if his Strength is under 15. Constitution is a larger problem, however, since

this cannot be built through purchases. The wizard and the dwarf will have a difficult time of it if they don't begin the game with at least a Constitution of 30. You can use this limitation as a challenge, however, by accepting a list of attributes not really suited for your chosen character, thereby attempting to play a more difficult game.

Life Points are also chosen at random by the computer, but are always within a given range for each character. For example: the warrior and the huntress will always begin the game with between 90 and 100 Life Points. But the dwarf will receive only between 70 and 80 Life Points, as he is a smaller character and is assumed to have lower energy, a smaller amount of "life breath." The wizard's Life Point range is 85-90, the elf's 80-85.

So, if you choose to be the dwarf, you will probably want to purchase more Food and Drink to increase your available Life Points. As noted earlier, Strength can be increased through a wise selection of weapons. You can raise your Armor Class by purchases made at the armors. Speed ability is increased by the judicious purchase of fine horse flesh. Wealth, in the form of coppers, is also assigned at random, and is used to make your purchases in the shops. But, remember, any unspent coppers will dissolve upon entering the dungeons. Additional Wealth is acquired through fighting monsters in the various rooms and picking up the treasures they guard. This is one of the objects of the game.

But, as in real life, money will not buy Constitution and Experience. Only by battling monsters can you gain Experience as an adventurer; the stronger the monster then the more Experience you acquire. Constitution is built only by trading some of this Experience when you reach the stairs at the end of each level.

CONSTITUTION can be described as character's general health, fitness, and endurance. In *DRAGON FIRE* this is translated into the number of hits you can sustain. A hit is a blow given to you by a monster. In other words, if your Constitution is rated at 27, you can be hit 27 times before you are dead. As a result, each time you choose to battle a monster, your Con-

stitution will be lowered a few points by the blows you receive.

Your decision whether or not to fight a particular monster may depend upon your available Constitution. If the monster is strong and you're weak in Constitution it would be risky to fight it. This attribute can prove crucial when you're nearing the end of a level and a wandering monster type attacks. In such cases you have no choice but to fight, and you will be killed if your Constitution is too low.

STRENGTH is more than just physical muscle, it is a combination of a character's physical power with the weapons he carries. For example, a crossbow will increase your Strength by 8 points, and a sword will increase it by 5. Strength can also affect characters in different ways. The warrior and the huntress accumulate Experience more slowly if they are low in Strength; they aren't able to learn as quickly. But the elf is the exact opposite; his Experience increases more quickly if he is low in Strength. The wizard uses magic instead of weapons, relying more on internal powers. Consequently, his Strength is automatically increased by 3.

Strength is a big determinant in a fight. Your Strength is used in a formula for deciding whether a monster hits you or not.

LIFE POINTS can be thought of as the energy, or the life breath, you have available for moving or performing such necessary tasks as breaking down a door to get into a room. If a door is jammed and you have to bang against it with your shoulder, 5 Life Points will be deducted for each try. As a general rule, you should try to have about 100 Life Points when entering a dungeon level.

Every step you take takes away from your Life Points by a value of 1. Your Life Points, like your Constitution, determine if you are still alive. If either goes below a value of 1, then you are dead. Life Points can be increased either by buying Food and Drink before you enter the dungeons, or by trading Experience for Life Points each time you enter a stair leading to a lower level.

But none of these characters are superhuman, however, so you will be

unable to accumulate more than 150 Life Points before beginning a level.

ARMOR CLASS is a rating given to the total accumulation of metal or leather armor, including shield and helmet, worn by your adventurer when he or she enters the dungeons. It is another factor in the formula for deciding if a monster's blow does you damage or not. Unlike the traditional Armor Class rating, the higher your Armor Class, the better protected you are.

You may raise your Armor Class rating by means of purchases from the armorer. First you may choose one suit of armor from the following: 1) Leather Armor, which is hardened by soaking in boiling oil then shaped to the body. This includes breastplate, shoulder pieces, and leggings. 2) Chain Mail, which is a flexible armor of joined metal links over padding. 3) Plate Mail, which is light chain joined to metal plates - breastplate, shoulder pieces, knee guards, etc. You will also be offered a helmet and a shield, from which you may buy one, both, or neither. Buy what you like, but remember that Armor Class cannot exceed 13.

SPEED is the same, a rating of 1, for all the characters since they are of humanoid stock. You may increase your character's Speed, however, by buying either a draft horse, which raises Speed to 2, or a light horse, which raises Speed to 3. Speed can be an important factor in a battle with a monster with a higher rating. For example, if a monster has a Speed rating of 3, and yours is only 1, that means the monster can hit you 3 times for each time you hit him once.

EXPERIENCE plays a very important part in the game of DRAGON

FIRE. Just as in real life, Experience is something you gain for doing things. In this game the Experience comes from slaying monsters. The amount of Experience you gain for killing a monster is determined by the monster's strength and the level you are playing on.

Before entering a lower level, you are given the opportunity to trade your Experience for additional Life Points and/or Constitution. Any Experience not traded is lost. Fighting monsters and accumulating Experience for trading is essential if you plan to descend to the lower levels of the dungeons and slay the great dragon Salmadon. As you descend, the monsters become stronger and stronger, so you will need a higher Constitution rating for each level. When you reach the tenth level, you will need a high number of Life Points in order to take all the steps necessary to find Salmadon's lair. You cannot acquire these essential Constitution and Life Points without plenty of Experience to trade for them!

WEALTH needs no defining. There are two kinds in DRAGON FIRE: 1) the random coppers you possess before entering the dungeons, and use to buy your supplies, and 2) the Kraums you acquire in your travels through the dungeons.

Remember there are two objects to DRAGON FIRE. One is to find the great dragon Salmadon's lair, kill him, and take his massive treasure. The other is simply to accumulate as much Wealth as possible and yet still get out alive. You cannot gain any Wealth without opening doors and battling the monsters there.

The currency used in our world of the dungeons is Guins and Kraums. The Kraum is equivalent to 4000 Guins.



THE WIZARD

THE CHARACTERS

The characters you have to choose from in DRAGON FIRE are as follows:

THE WARRIOR

The warrior is of the wandering barbarian type. Like his father before him he once served a great lord in the northern districts, whose death has left him landless and unemployed. Rival northern warlords have since divided and plundered his homeland of its wealth, so the warrior knows that most likely he will never be able to return.

Brought up in the various disciplines of weaponry, the warrior has known little else, and job opportunities for the fighting man are few and far between when there's no war to fight. He has worked as a private bodyguard many times, an advance scout for caravans of merchants, and occasionally as a police officer for those walled towns fearful of foreign assassins and arsonists. Fire is an ever-present danger in these places of closely-packed wood and straw huts.

Rumors abound concerning this tall figure with the curly black hair, as they do with any stranger wandering into these closely-knit communities. There is little traveling in this time before the harvest, and a new face arouses much suspicion. Some say the barbarian seeks revenge upon a man with a quarter-moon scar on his left cheek. Others say he's a professional bandit specializing in the exotic: the left hoof of the centaur, the lost crown of the Faerie King, the eye of the stingbat, and the like. And still others say he seeks to give up his present occupation as fighting man and find something more peaceful, perhaps as an artisan or baker's apprentice. A few insist he flees memories of a lost love.

If you were to ask him, the warrior might answer yes to any of the above. He's done all these things and more in his lifetime. An artisan would be a good thing to be, he sometimes thinks, as he has always appreciated the beautiful and enjoyed making

things with his hands, even if it were just a crude bridle or makeshift canoe.

Presently he seeks adventure, the pure pleasure of an adventure worthy of his hard-earned skills. He's grown bored and stale. If there be any treasure involved, then so much the better.

The warrior is close to six feet in height, black hair, eyes gray as an evening cloud. He most often dresses in grays and dull silver. He may use any weapon, including magic weapons, and wear any kind of armor. His Experience increases more slowly if he is low in Strength.

THE HUNTRESS

Female warriors are not unheard of in these regions, but their homelands, their purposes, sometimes even their names, have remained secret. Three-finger John, the tavern owner, is convinced they hail from wandering "daughter bands" of amazons who kill their husbands and any male children born to them. "They eat raw meat and drink the blood from dying animals," he tells his barmaid with a wink.

His barmaid counters that they're probably just local women who'd left the area to learn the warrior trade elsewhere. "You local men being too bull-headed to allow 'em into the guilds," she tells him.

Three-finger John knows better than to argue with her; she handles that broom and tray like a sword and shield.

The huntress is taller than any of the other female warriors these people have seen, and with her finely-chiseled nose, brilliant green eyes, and fine sandy hair tied into a bun on her back, she makes a striking figure. She dresses in a coat made from the skins of an animal these people have never seen before, the skin tanned and treated using methods apparently far beyond their own. Under this she wears a breastplate of tight red leather, with a short skirt beneath this

armor. Her boots are unusual, long and soft with a point at the toes, and the leather ornamented with stars. Her cap seems to match these with its forward-curving point. Running through the countryside in this soft red and brown outfit, she is said to resemble very much a large deer or elk.

She is independent; she serves no one. With the same number of Life Points as the warrior, she can be a formidable opponent, so no one insults her lightly. She is a fine rider, can handle any weapon, and has been seen carrying both a double-headed axe and a small shield shaped like a five-day-old moon.

THE WIZARD

The wizard is the younger of two brothers. They were both apprenticed to the same ancient mage, and the older was by far the more skilled of the two. The fact that the older brother was killed in his attempts to slay the great dragon of the dungeons makes the wizard's participation in this new venture all the more impressive.

The occupation of wizard is not for the lazy. Those young apprentices who relaxed and played grew up to be fat and foolish old men with little to busy themselves other than simple magic tricks. The wizard applied himself, working long hours into the night until he often fell asleep over his books of lore, until now he is tall and thin, with long white hair fine as corn-silk. It would require no less than another wizard to find an ounce of fat on those bones!

Wizards are said to love disguises, and this one is no different. Many has been the time he's dressed the part of the elm, the weeping maiden, the grass-covered hillock, or the deer in flight. It is rumored he also has the ability to change his physical form, but still much prefers the old-fashioned disguise.

The wizard is a loner, and although he can be hired by a king or rich merchant to perform certain tasks, he will take up quarters in a tower or cellar apart from all others. People will not bother a wizard when he is so secluded, not if they'd prefer not being turned into toads, bales of

straw, or slop for the pigs.

Wizards have a harder time of it than witches or warlocks; a wizard doesn't have the devil to help him out. The wizard does have problems controlling his arrogance, however, and this can sometimes lead a wizard down some rather sinister and evil paths. He must use considerable self-control if he is to avoid this, holding back on his powers when there are innocents about, dissolving offensive objects with his withering glance only on special occasions, and at all times remembering that no matter how powerful he might be, there will always be other wizards more powerful.

The wizard wears a long dark purple garment a bit the shade of sunset, a bit the shade of roasted boar. You never know when he may appear, or when he may find it to his advantage to vanish into shadow. Some say his father was the Hoarfrost, but none can really know for sure. He thinks most of vengeance, of slicing the great dragon up for the dogs.

The wizard is a magic-user, but cannot use weapons of any kind, except for two non-magical daggers. He has no need for a magical weapon, possessing all the power he needs in his senses and hands. Because he uses magic, your Strength rating is increased by 3 if you choose him. He must have at least 30 for Constitution, or his Experience will increase more slowly than normal.

THE DWARF

Dwarves aren't as short as most people expect; four feet would be an average height. They are somewhat broader in the shoulders than the average man, making them capable of withstanding a great deal of punishment. Dwarves tend to specialize in hard, quick, precisely cutting blows with their bladed weapons, and no one is better in a club fight or tavern brawl.

The dwarf currently works as helper to the local smithy. Dwarves are known for their abilities at the forge and furnace, and the dwarf couldn't have a more enjoyable job for his brief time among people. His position off the town square also provides him with a good vantage point for

viewing the habits and follies of human beings, one of his favorite pastimes. Dwarves pride themselves on knowing more about the human race than the human race could ever know about dwarves.

Belief in the one "great wrong" no doubt influences dwarf behavior more than any other thing. For dwarves believe they own all treasure underground, and all treasure which originated underground. They feel that humankind has repeatedly stolen this treasure. So, although dwarves have been accused of all kinds of thievery and are much-distrusted by human folk, they believe they are only reclaiming the treasure which is actually theirs by birthright.

The dwarf is angered by the great dragon's presence in the dungeons, and believes it is his duty to reclaim this treasure in behalf of all dwarves. He finds life among the humans but barely tolerable, and is quite anxious to return to the tunnels and caverns of his own underground home. He has made the amassing and increasing of treasure his profession.

Dwarves form well-disciplined armies under a monarch. They give their obedience to others grudgingly. Most remain stubborn and independent even in their own groups, allowing them to become capable individual fighters.

The dwarf can wear any armor and use all weapons. He has been known to manufacture magical objects, but generally has little use for magic. His one great weakness is his lust for gold; it often gets him into trouble. Since the dwarf is a sturdy fighter, he should have a Constitution of at least 30. With a Constitution below 30 he increases more slowly than normal in Experience.

THE ELF

You can't find an elf, no matter how hard you try. They will always find you. Elves are highly secretive creatures, vanishing here and reappearing there; they enjoy travel more than most anything. They make good friends when not pressed. But remember they can't be sought out, and they leave few tracks behind when they depart. When they're ready, they'll appear. Not before.

The elf wants to have little to do

with the people in town; he distrusts humans instinctively. And he has little use for money either; elves don't use money, except when they are required to do so in their dealings with humans.

So why would an elf be interested in slaying the great dragon?

Except for their king, the elves salute only themselves. Their independence is much prized. But some of the elf clan have been recruited into military service by one of the unscrupulous eastern kings, a human being with a magician in his service. The king has made it clear these elves will not be released until a large ransom is paid. Like many human beings, the king believes the elves know the secret locations of many lost treasures, so he has set this ransom quite high.

The elf is determined to slay the dragon and accumulate enough money to buy his fellows out of servitude. Elves possess a great sense of kinship and don't like being separated from their kind.

Dressed in shades of light green, blue, and brown, the elf blends easily into most natural backgrounds. He is thin, yet muscular, and few are quicker in battle. Elves possess a limited ability to see into the future.

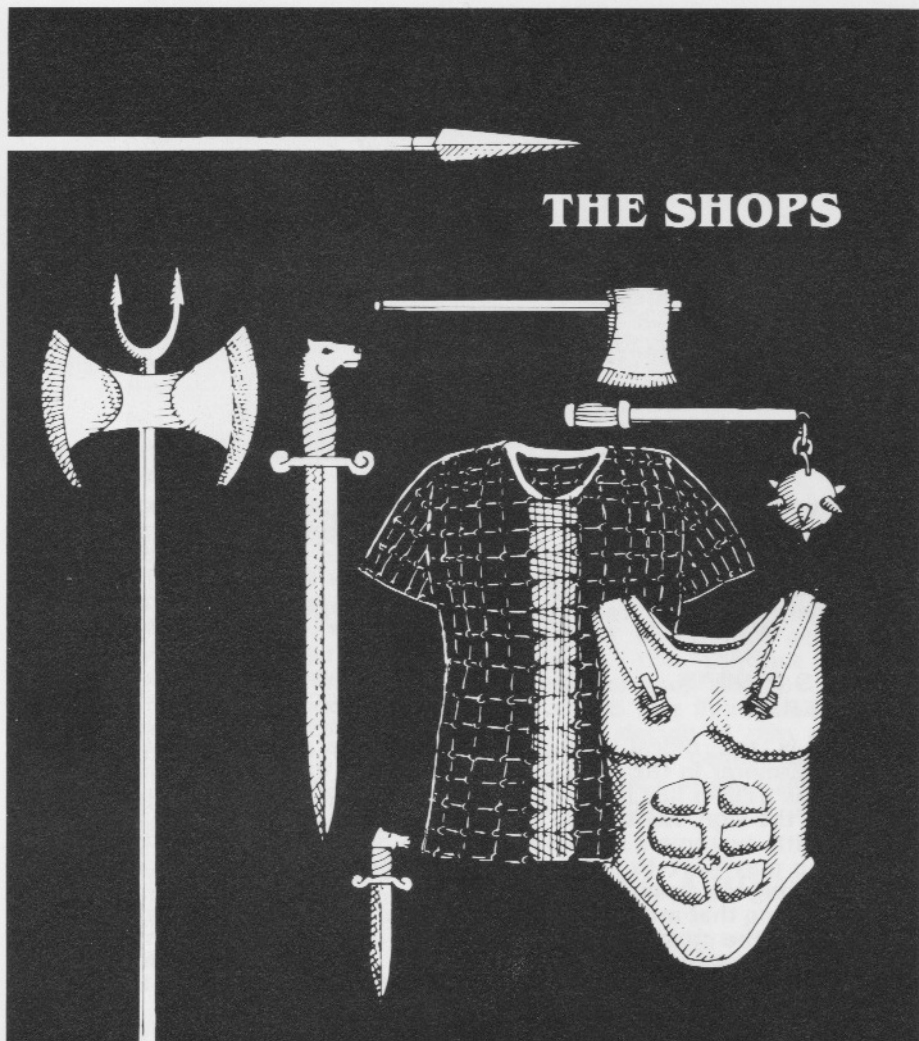
Important Advice: never eat the food the elves provide, nor drink their drink. You might not be seen again among human beings.

The elf is both a warrior and a magic-user, and can use any type of weapon or armor. His Experience increases more quickly if he is low in Strength.

After you've chosen a character you will be given a display of "Your Attributes At Present." You should determine at this point what attributes you are low in and decide whether you'd like to build these attributes through purchases in your trip through the Shops. For example, the highest Armor Class allowed is 13. If your Armor Class is a 4, you may want to buy some extra armor from Fliver's & Sons. If your Life Points total less than 100, you will probably want to buy food and drink at Three-finger John's tavern. The Speed rating is equal for all the characters, but if you'd like some additional fighting advantage, you might consider buying a horse.



THE ELF



THE SHOPS

After picking your character and seeing your attributes displayed, you will be given a random amount of copper pieces to spend in some of the shops in town. A list of supplies will be displayed on the screen for you to choose from. Spend your coppers wisely and spend them all. When you enter the dungeons, just the very closeness of the great dragon will dissolve any unspent copper.

Remember: the items that you buy will raise your attributes, so spend them on items which will raise the attributes you are weakest in. You will be given only one chance to buy supplies.

Try to keep track of how much you spend, so you aren't caught short on a necessary item. Also, enter choices only from the numbered list displayed on the screen, otherwise you may lose that choice. Press the RETURN key after each individual selection.

WINSOME WILLY'S WEAPONS SHOP

Although merely a narrow corridor off one of the town's grimmer back alleys, Willy's is perhaps the finest emporium of used weaponry in the area. Willy will go to any lengths to replenish his diverse stock, including raiding the bloody battlefields, am-

bushing unwary warriors, and has even stooped to grave robbing upon occasion. Please watch your head; hand axes, maces, and battle axes are hung just above eye level. You may also examine the merchandise in the back room, if you don't mind blood-stains. But don't purchase your armor at Willy's; the plates are either full of holes or paper-thin from battering.

You may buy two weapons from Willy unless you're a wizard. The wizard is only permitted two, non-magical daggers.

Weapon	Price	Increased By:
Spear	4 Coppers	2
Dagger	4 Coppers	2
Hand Axe	4 Coppers	2
Mace	6 Coppers	3
Sword	10 Coppers	5
Battle Axe	8 Coppers	4
Morning Star		
Star	6 Coppers	3
Lance	4 Coppers	2
Pike	6 Coppers	3
Crossbow	20 Coppers	8

FLIVER'S & SONS, ARMORERS

Fliver is the oldest and most respected armorer in the town. There are no "sons"; Fliver just likes the way it looks on the sign. His shop is quite crowded with customers at this time of day; you may have to avoid a few warriors trying on armor, and other warriors testing that armor. Try not to stumble over the customers piled up outside the entrance.

You are allowed one suit of armor from Fliver's; two would be much too bulky to maneuver in. Raising your armor class makes it harder for a monster to harm you.

Armor	Price	Raises Your Armor:
Leather Armor	10 Coppers	1
Chain Mail	30 Coppers	2
Plate Mail	50 Coppers	3

Wait! Fliver has chased you down outside his shop, wanting to sell you a helmet and a shield. He claims they're a bargain. You may buy one, both, or neither.

Item	Price	Raises Your Armor:
Helmet	15 Coppers	1
Shield	15 Coppers	1

STABLES AND SMITHY

You might consider buying a horse if you can afford it. A horse will raise your speed, which can be important in a fight. The dwarf works here as the smithy's assistant.

Horse	Price	Will Raise Your Speed
Draft Horse	30 Coppers	1
Light Horse	50 Coppers	2

THREE-FINGER JOHN'S TAVERN

Your last stop before beginning your adventure is back at the tavern, saying goodbye to friends and acquaintances, and stocking up on any foodstuffs you might need for the trip. The foods you buy will increase your Life Points, and you may buy as much as you can afford. Be sure to check how many coppers you have remaining; they will be displayed on your screen, along with Three-finger John's grocery list for hungry adventurers:

Item	Price	Raises Your Life Points
2 Loaves of bread	2 Coppers	5
Standard Rations Package	5 Coppers	15
Iron Rations	10 Coppers	30
Quart of wine, in skin	2 Coppers	5

MANEUVERING THROUGH THE DUNGEONS



After you're finished at the shops, the monsters will be aroused and you will be entering the first level of the dungeons. This first level will be different each game as the levels are rearranged each time. You will see the first maze displayed on your screen. On a black-and-white monitor (or television screen) the corridors are white with thin lines, the walls dark and solid, and the doors a series of vertical bars breaking up the solid walls. On a color monitor the walls are gray, the corridors yellow, and the doors a bright blue. In either case your character is represented by the white box.

Beneath this maze the computer displays the current status of your character:

C= S= W= KRAUMS
A= L= E=

ENTER YOUR MOVE (I,J,K,M,Q)

Of course, C is your Constitution, A your Armor Class, S your Strength, L your Life Points, W your Wealth in Kraums, and E your Experience.

When the disk drive stops you are ready to choose your move from the list of commands. The computer will not allow you to go through a wall, but will give you another chance to move if you attempt it. You will lose 1 Life Point for the attempt, however.

Remember, this is a time-limited game. Every few seconds passed without a move having been made will cost you another Life Point! And, once your Life Points run out, so does your time.

DOOR JAMS

Occasionally, a door you attempt to enter will be jammed. The computer will ask you if you wish to ram it. Pressing Y or RETURN accepts this challenge. You continue to press RETURN for each attempt and it will cost you 5 Life Points for each try. After you decide to ram a door, by pressing Y you cannot change your mind and back away. A jammed door remains jammed until you ram it open.

ENTERING A ROOM

Upon entering a room a description of the room will be displayed, along with the treasure it contains and the name of the monster in residence there with the monster's Armor Class, Strength, and Speed.

Press RETURN after reading this information.

The next screen will display your Constitution and the monster's Strength in two boxes. Your Constitution rating compared with the monster's Strength is a good means of determining if you're strong enough to battle the monster. Armor Class and Speed figure in too, however. If a monster's Strength is greater than your Constitution, it may be still worth risking a fight if you have a good Armor rating and own a horse.

The computer tells you ENTER F for FIGHT TO DEATH, N for DON'T FIGHT, or H for HAND TO HAND.

In DRAGON FIRE you have the option of fighting one hit at a time, by pressing H for each move, or fighting to the death by pressing F. When fighting to the death the sound is turned off and the computer takes over the battle. When fighting a monster Hand To Hand you should monitor your Constitution points, however, and if the fight is not going well and your Constitution is getting too low, it may be best to break off the fight by entering N for Don't Fight.

The hit points are a random number computed according to the dungeon level you are on and the expertise level at which you are playing.

If you press N to stop the attack (when fighting Hand To Hand) the monster may then attack you, taking some of your Wealth and perhaps scoring some damaging hits to your Constitution. One of the strategies involved in playing DRAGON FIRE is knowing when to fight and when to run away.

In some rooms you will encounter no monsters or treasure of any kind. Pressing RETURN will get you back in to the maze.

The only way to get wealthy in this game is to go through doors. Most of the treasure in the corridors has already been taken by the "Adventurers" who were too timid to open the doors. You will also not gain Experience simply by staying away from the doors, so you must fight in order to win.

TRAPS AND PITFALLS

There are several traps, pitfalls, wandering monster types, and other hazards in the dungeons, but you will have to discover those for yourself. Some of these may actually help your progress through the maze, but most can cause you serious damage, perhaps even death.

THINGS YOU MIGHT FIND ALONG THE WAY

Of course the wizard's red keys are the most important objects you might find in the corridors, as you must have one of the "fixed" keys in your possession in order to slay Salmadon. Only a few of these keys have power in them; the majority do

not. Therefore, you want to collect all of the red keys you can find. There's nothing to lose in picking up a key; they do not have the power to hurt you.

Various other objects are scattered throughout the dungeons: pouches, chests, boxes, swords, bottles, bracelets, and the like. Some of these have magical powers which might either add to or take away from your attributes. Others are simply junk. You examine any of these at your own risk.

TRADING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Each time you enter a stairway to a lower level you are given the opportunity to trade Experience points, acquired through your battles with the various monsters, for either Constitution or Life Points, or both. As always, a pressed RETURN defaults to a Y answer, and remember to press RETURN after entering each choice. Remember that you will need greater amounts of Constitution the deeper you descend into the dungeons because the monsters get progressively stronger. You should also have at least 100 Life Points at the start of each level, and even more to find Salmadon's lair on the tenth level. But you are limited to a maximum of 150 Life Points at all times.

Trading is very important! You cannot defeat the monsters in the lower levels without lots of Constitution, and you will quickly run out of Life Points if you do not replenish them. If you press N before trading and then change your mind, simply go back through the exit and descend the staircase a second time. If you do trade, be sure to trade all your Experience, because any Experience not traded is lost.

STRATEGY

Strategy enters into DRAGON FIRE in several ways. Following these suggestions may help you win:

Choose your purchases in the shops carefully! Sometimes a higher Armor Class or Speed rating will enable you to win a fight you might not normally have won. But you should improve your weak areas first.

Monitor Life Points and Constitution carefully! If you are getting dangerously low in either one, run to the nearest exit (this can even be the one you just left) and trade your Experience. Remember, if you try to travel with low Constitution, you risk running into a wandering monster type strong enough to finish you off. Another reason not to let your Constitution get too low is that you may have to reply N to battles with monsters which might have gained you valuable Experience points for trading.

Don't try to conquer a whole level at once. Open a few doors and beat the monsters there. Then go to the exit at the left of the level you're on and trade your Experience. In other words, don't get too weak before trading. This is particularly important advice at the higher levels of expertise. Since your Experience increases more slowly at these levels, you will be operating with generally lower attributes most of the time. As a result, don't hesitate to run or to avoid a battle. Choose with care the few battles you will fight in order to gain Experience.

SAVING A GAME

If you wish to save games in progress, allowing you to return to the same point in the maze after quitting for a time, you must prepare a "Save" diskette. This may be done once, and allows you to save one game. Future games you wish to save will also use this "Save" diskette by replacing the previously saved game with the new one. To make your "Save" diskette, press the "I" key when the dragon picture is on the screen. Then follow the instructions for initialization that will appear on the screen. A game can only be saved on a diskette initialized in this manner.

The Quit (Q) command allows you to stop the game in progress and save it on another diskette to continue at a later date. The (Q) command only works when you are entering movement commands. Once you press the (Q) command the computer will first ask you if you really want to quit, to

ensure against accidentally stopping the game. If you are sure you want to stop at this point, you may press Y and the computer will tell you when to remove your DRAGON FIRE diskette and insert your preinitialized diskette for saving the game in progress.

When you are ready to continue playing your "saved" game, you must "reboot" the DRAGON FIRE diskette by inserting it into the disk drive and turning on the machine. Follow the opening steps of the game as usual until the question 'NEW GAME OR OLD GAME (N/O)?' is displayed. Press the letter 'O' key and the computer will tell you when to insert your diskette with the saved game.

SLAYING SALMADON

The great Salmadon's lair is hidden somewhere on the tenth level. In order to find it you must build up your Constitution and Life Points by a great deal of fighting on levels 9 and 10 and trading on the staircases. At times it may be necessary to enter level 10, fight several monsters, then go back to level 9 and then again to the staircase to maintain and build Constitution and Life Points.

The only way to find Salmadon's lair is to ram into solid walls until you find the hidden entrance passage. This will take some patience, and a lot of Life Points, since there are quite a few walls to choose from. Once you find this passage, you will have no choice but to fight Salmadon, and if you do not have one of the "fixed" red keys, he will destroy you immediately.

Either the death of your character or your defeat of the great dragon and the subsequent awarding of treasure and certificate ends the game of DRAGON FIRE. If you happen to win, try to advance to a higher level of expertise in your next game.

The last thing you will see on your screen is an updated record, arranged by level of play, of the highest accumulation of wealth achieved by an adventurer outside Salmadon's lair. Beat your old record and you'll see your new rating entered on this list.

IF YOU ENJOYED DRAGON FIRE,TM WATCH FOR THE SEQUEL!

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is an exciting adventure game which challenges your leadership ability. It takes place in a fantasy universe, includes a full length short story and features the 5 characters introduced in Dragon FireTM. But it's an entirely new game!

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Kaves of Karkhan has three levels of difficulty. There is a time limit, so every move is critical.

Kaves of Karkhan, written entirely in machine language, features 3-D Hi-Res graphics, animation and sound effects. It is a perfect game for experienced role playing enthusiasts as well as novices.

So come with your favorite character and explore the Kaves of Karkhan.

System Requirements: Apple II Plus, or Apple II with 48K RAM, Applesoft in ROM or Language Card (or equivalent), DOS 3.3, and 1 Disk Drive.

The second in a series of computer games from LEVEL-10, A Division of Dakin5 Corporation.

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The game is very simple to understand and does not require a knowledge of role-playing games to play. You can finish a novice game in just a few hours. You also have the option of saving a game in progress. At the higher levels **DRAGON FIRE** is challenging even for experienced role-players.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: 48K, DOS 3.3, 1 Disk Drive, Apple II, Apple II Plus or Apple III.

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